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Sen. Carlin Yoder
Sen. James Buck
Sen. Earline Rogers
Sen. Frank Mrvan
Sen. Connie Sipes
Rep. Greg Porter, Vice-Chairperson
Rep. Shelli VanDenburgh
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Rep. Randy Truitt



INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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Authority: Legislative Council Resolution 09-01

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: October 26, 2009
Meeting Time: 1:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington
St., Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 3

Members Present: Sen. Dennis Kruse, Chairperson; Sen. Carlin Yoder; Sen. James Buck; Sen. Earline Rogers; Sen. Frank Mrvan; Rep. Greg Porter, Vice-Chairperson; Rep. Shelli VanDenburgh; Rep. Charles Moseley; Rep. Robert Behning; Rep. Jeffrey Thompson; Rep. Randy Truitt.

Members Absent: Sen. Connie Sipes.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m., and called for testimony concerning teen dating violence.

Julie Marsh, Domestic Violence Network, provided the Committee with statistics concerning domestic violence as it impacts students. (Exhibit A) She stated that Indianapolis has been selected to receive a "Start Strong" grant to teach healthy relationship skills to students in 7th grade. Currently, the nine week program is being used

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in the Washington Township schools. She explained that students who have been surrounded by domestic violence don't have any other model for relationships, and programs like "Start Strong", which are evidence based and interactive, provide healthy models. These programs are likely to lower the incidence of teen dating violence and create healthy dating relationships.

Anita Carpenter, Indiana Coalition Against Sexual Assault, testified that dating violence is prevalent. According to Ms. Carpenter, one in four girls, and one in six boys, will be a victim of violence during his or her lifetime, with each victim six times more likely to be victimized more than once. For youth growing up in a violent environment, education concerning healthy relationships is necessary to affect social norms positively.

Tom Oestreich, Assistant Principal, Eastwood Middle School, Metropolitan School District of Washington Township, Marion County, stated that he is the coordinator for "Start Strong" Indianapolis, which uses the "Safe Dates" curriculum in grade 7. This curriculum has nine 45 minute sessions that are integrated into the health curriculum. In his experience, students are engaged by the course, voicing opinions and asking questions. In addition, a parental component is included with the course, as many parents don't know how to address these issues with their children. He feels it is essential for schools to help children develop into healthy physical and emotional beings.

Chloe McClellan, a survivor of a violent teen relationship, explained that an educational program based on healthy relationships would have helped her identify signs of potential control and violence before it began. She had hidden the signs of her violent relationship from her parents for four years. Ms. McClellan now speaks with young women about violence in relationships. She has found that young girls think it is normal to be controlled in a relationship, since many have no other relationship models. She believes it is easier for teens to talk with their peers than parents, therefore school programs are helpful.

Debbie Norris, founder of Heather's Voice, is the mother of Heather Norris, who was murdered by her abusive boyfriend. She wants to educate teenagers about domestic violence, and speaks to schools, church groups, and others about her daughter's experience and healthy relationships. After speaking, she often receives e-mails from teens in abusive relationships and parents who don't know how to approach the topic. (Exhibit B). She believes that teens need to be educated about relationship violence when they're starting to date.

Following Committee discussion, the Committee adopted the following motions:

The Committee recommends that legislation be prepared for the 2010 legislative session regarding educational programs concerning teen dating violence. (Adopted by voice vote, 11-0.)

The Committee encourages the General Assembly to increase funding for adult education so that existing programs and facilities around the state remain solvent and may continue to operate. (Adopted by voice vote, 11-0.)

The Committee supports sustainable and adequate funding for afterschool programming. (Adopted by voice vote, 11-0.)

The Committee recommends that the General Assembly continue to review the issue of instituting a uniform, minimum school start date and take further action as necessary to address the issue in the future. (Adopted by voice vote, 10-1.)

The Committee requests the Legislative Services Agency to compile, before December 31, 2009, data on statewide school energy consumption and transportation costs and submit the data to the members of the Committee. (Adopted by voice vote, 10-1.)

The Committee then unanimously adopted the draft final report, with the understanding that the activities at today's meeting will be included, and was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.